

Digital Transformation of Indigenous Culture in Covid-19 (work in progress)

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Web 2.0 and internet technology's ubiquitousness has significantly influenced our social interaction and identity formation. With social media's help, one can negotiate with their identity on the online platform, play a role of their choice, and communicate with their peers. Now, our social, political, and cultural life is deeply embedded with technology and social media. This new phenomenon has attracted scholars and researchers from science and technology and humanities and social science and created a common ground for working together to understand and explain the relationship between science and society. Many of us are interested in learning about the influence of technology in our everyday life and how it shapes our identity and existence in a mediated world where the screen interaction overshadows the physical interaction of human beings. Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic has forced us to rely more on the screen when the borders are shut down, and the physical movements of human beings are restricted.

So, this study will assess the role of social media in the construction of social and community identity. The study is based on the Nyishi community, one of the indigenous communities from Arunachal Pradesh, the North-eastern state of India. I am keenly interested in the participation of Nyishi people on Facebook because most of the people from this community use Facebook and find it user-friendly, unlike Twitter or Instagram. As far as Arunachal Pradesh is concerned, it is disconnected from the rest of the world because of its geographical location. Poor IT infrastructure and education keep them away from the developed and modern world. Based on my 2016-17 ethnographic study on the Nyishi community, Facebook or any other social media was not a relevant topic for the Nyishi people. The popularity of Facebook among the Nyishi is a recent phenomenon, and people find it simple and user-friendly. Since more people are participating and using Facebook, I found Facebook is an ideal platform to measure the influence of technology on Nyishi culture and society.

The novelty of this research lies in the Nyishi community's transitions due to the influence of social media on them. When the world is grappling with the Covid-19 situations and physical interaction of human beings is prohibited, this indigenous community from North-East India found social media platforms more exciting and interactive. They have been organizing online folklore competitions on their Facebook page and attracting people to participate actively. This innovative way of circulation and preservation of cultural heritage is commendable.

In this study, I analyze both contents and comments from their Facebook page by using the Voyant tool. The analysis on the Voyant tool provides information about the most debated and discussed topic on their Facebook page, which gives us an idea about their cultural heritage and sentiment attached to it. It has also used GIS and Mapping to locate the most and least number of participants in Arunachal Pradesh. It will also give us a clear picture of the demographic distribution of the Nyishi community in Arunachal Pradesh.